UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/15/Add.67
24 January 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Fourteenth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Ethiopia

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Ethiopia (CRC/C/8/Add.27) at its 349th to 351st meetings (CRC/C/SR.349-351) held on 9 and 10 January 1997 and adopted* the following concluding observations:

A. Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the State party for engaging in an open and constructive dialogue with the Committee. It welcomes the submission of the initial report of Ethiopia, which follows the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of States parties' initial reports, as well as written answers to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/ETH.1), although it notes that a number of the questions asked were not answered. The Committee particularly wishes to express its satisfaction at the self-critical approach of the report in identifying a number of areas of concern, and it welcomes the willingness expressed by the delegation that the suggestions and recommendations made during the discussion would be duly taken into account by the Ethiopian authorities.

B. Positive factors

3. The Committee notes with appreciation the steps taken since 1991 to set up democratic institutions in the country. It welcomes the adoption of a new Constitution, which incorporates international standards in the field of human rights, including, in its article 36, a specific reference to some of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

---

* At the 371st meeting, held on 24 January 1997.

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the Convention, as well as other international treaties dealing with human rights, are incorporated into domestic law, and that article 13 of the Constitution states that human rights provisions of the Constitution are to be interpreted in line with international human rights instruments ratified by Ethiopia.

5. The Committee also welcomes the political commitment within the country to improve the situation of children, which finds expression notably through the setting up of an Inter-ministerial Legal Committee to review national legislation and its compatibility with the provisions of the Convention, through the establishment of committees on the rights of the child at the national, regional, zonal and woreda levels, as well as through the adoption of a National Plan of Action and the establishment of a ministerial committee to monitor its implementation.

6. The Committee is encouraged by the combined efforts undertaken by the Government and international or non-governmental organizations to protect and promote children's rights, in particular in the field of information on HIV/AIDS and information campaigns on harmful traditional practices affecting children. With regard to the latter, the Committee welcomes the establishment of the National Committee on Traditional Practices to develop information and sensitization campaigns on all forms of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, with a particular emphasis on female genital mutilation.

7. The Committee notes with appreciation that primary education has been made free, although it regrets that it has not yet been made compulsory.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

8. The Committee acknowledges that the State party has had to face, during the past few years, economic, social and political challenges, due, inter alia, to years of civil war and the transition to democracy. It notes the existence of interregional and urban/rural disparities, in particular with regard to the availability of resources and infrastructure, which may lead to discrimination in the enjoyment of the rights provided for in the Convention. Furthermore, the Committee notes that certain traditional practices and customs, prevailing particularly in rural areas, hamper the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to the girl child.

D. Principal subjects of concern

9. The Committee notes that, although the notification of the ratification of the Convention by Ethiopia was published in the Official Gazette, the full text of the Convention has to date not been published in the Gazette, thus making it difficult for law enforcement officials, judicial personnel and other professionals working with and for children to have access to and an understanding of its provisions.

10. The Committee also notes that there is a lack of awareness and understanding in the State party of the principles and provisions of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee is concerned at the lack of adequate and systematic training provided to law enforcement officials, judicial personnel, teachers, social workers and medical personnel. The Committee further notes that insufficient attention has been paid in practice as well as in the legislation to the principles of the best interests of the child, respect for the child's views and the child's participation in family, social and school life.

11. The Committee notes with concern the lack of adequate mechanisms for the collection of reliable quantitative and qualitative data on the situation of children throughout the country, which hinders the effective assessment by the authorities of the situation of each and every group of children in all parts of the country, and thus makes the adoption of targeted policies in the field of the protection of the rights of children difficult.

12. The Committee expresses its concern about the negative effects of poverty on the situation of children in Ethiopia, as illustrated by the high levels of infant and under-five mortality rates and malnutrition, and at the low levels of school enrolment, education, immunization coverage and health services in general.

13. The Committee notes with concern the non-compatibility of certain provisions of domestic law with the principles and rights enshrined in the Convention, such as the provision for a different minimum age of marriage between girls (15 years of age) and boys (18 years of age), the provision in the Penal Code for the possibility to sentence children to corporal punishment, the provision in the Civil Code for "light bodily punishment" as an educative measure within the family and the limitation of the right to counsel when the child may be represented by his or her parents or legal guardian during legal proceedings.

14. The Committee remains concerned at prevailing traditional attitudes and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, early marriages and teenage pregnancies, and at the persistence of discriminatory social attitudes against vulnerable groups of children, such as the girl child, disabled children, children born out of wedlock and children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS, including orphans.

15. The Committee is concerned that insufficient steps have been taken to ensure the registration of children after birth and that the State registration procedure is hampered in practice by the lack of registration desks, especially in rural areas. The Committee also expresses its concern in relation to the lack of adequate means available for the registration of refugee children.

16. The Committee is concerned that, since children are able to lodge complaints only through their parents or legal guardians, the right to adequate recourse and complaint procedures for children victim of abuse, including sexual abuse, neglect or ill-treatment within their families, does

not seem to be secured. The Committee is also concerned that the enjoyment by children of their right to participate actively in the promotion of their own rights does not seem to be guaranteed.

17. The Committee is concerned at the low levels of school enrolment and at the high drop-out rates, especially among girls, at the lack of learning and teaching facilities and at the shortage of trained teachers, in particular in rural areas. It shares the concerns expressed in the State party's report that the school curricula are divorced from cultural and social realities, and regrets that they do not yet include a programme of education on human rights and children's rights. Moreover, the Committee expresses the concern, as mentioned above, that primary education has not yet been made compulsory.

18. The Committee expresses the concern that the systems of national and intercountry adoptions are not fully in conformity with the provisions of article 21 of the Convention, in particular article 21 (a), and with the principles of the best interests of the child and respect for his or her views.

19. The Committee is also concerned at the situation of children in especially difficult circumstances, including children living and/or working in the street, and at the incidence of child labour, in particular in the informal sector.

20. The Committee is deeply concerned at the present system of juvenile justice, which is not in conformity with articles 37, 39 and 40 of the Convention. It is particularly concerned about the setting of the age of criminal responsibility at 9 years and that as from the age of 15 years, children are treated as adults. In this regard, the Committee regrets that it was not made clear during the discussion whether the latter means that children above 15 years of age may be sentenced to life imprisonment or detained together with adults. Furthermore, the Committee expresses concern at the possibility, mentioned above, provided for in article 172 of the Penal Code to sentence children to corporal punishment at the sole discretion of the judge, in particular with regard to the "bad or good character" of the child in determining the penalty to be applied to the child, and at the possible limitations of the right to legal counsel.

21. In the light of article 39 of the Convention, the Committee is also concerned at the insufficient measures taken by the authorities for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children victims of war.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

22. The Committee recommends that the full text of the Convention be published in the Official Gazette and that training manuals incorporating the text of the Convention be published for the professional groups working with or for children.

23. The Committee encourages the Government to continue its efforts aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of the principles and provisions of the Convention, in the light of article 42 of the Convention, in particular by

ensuring the translation and publication of the text of the Convention in all national languages. Such measures would promote change in persisting negative attitudes towards children, particularly girls, disabled children, children born out of wedlock, children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS, including orphans, and contribute to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health and well-being of children, such as female genital mutilation, early marriages and teenage pregnancies. Such efforts should be pursued in close cooperation with community and religious leaders and non-governmental organizations, at all levels of the State, i.e. national, regional, zonal and woreda levels, and special emphasis should be placed on the need to coordinate the policies designed to implement the Convention between central and local authorities.

24. The Committee also encourages the State party to provide systematic training on the principles and rights enshrined in the Convention to the professional groups working with and for children, such as law enforcement officials, judicial personnel, personnel in child-care institutions, teachers, social workers and medical personnel, as well as to the personnel entrusted with the task of ensuring data collection in the areas covered by the Convention. Similarly, attention should be given to incorporating the Convention in school curricula, as recommended by the General Assembly in proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, and by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

25. The Committee also recommends that the State party strengthen coordination between the various governmental mechanisms involved in children's rights, at both the national and local levels, with a view to developing a comprehensive policy on children and ensuring effective evaluation of the implementation of the Convention in the country. It further recommends that the setting up of an independent mechanism, such as an Ombudsperson on the Rights of the Child or a Human Rights Commission, to ensure observance of children's rights, be considered.

26. The Committee recommends that the system of data collection be improved at the central and local levels of the State, and that it comprise all the areas covered by the Convention. Such a system should include all groups of children, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups of children and on children in especially difficult circumstances, and adequate disaggregated data should be identified with a view to assessing progress achieved in the realization of children's rights and defining the policies to be adopted to better implement the provisions of the Convention. With regard to the latter, the Committee suggests that further studies and follow-up surveys on vulnerable groups of children be initiated and it recommends that the State party consider requesting technical assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to address this question.

27. The Committee recommends that the Government pursue the process of bringing existing legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention and that the best interests of the child be fully taken into account in the drafting of new legislation. In this regard, the Committee particularly recommends that the provisions for the minimum age of marriage for girls at

15 years, the sentencing of children to corporal punishment, the "light bodily punishment" as an educational measure within the family, and the limitation of the right to legal counsel of children be abolished as a matter of priority.

28. The Committee recommends that with respect to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, budget allocations should be made to the maximum extent of the State party's available resources and should give priority to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, including the rights to health, education and rehabilitation, and that particular attention be paid to children belonging to the most disadvantaged groups, such as girls, disabled children, children living in rural areas, children living and/or working in the street, children involved in the administration of juvenile justice system and children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS, including orphans. In this regard, and with a view to contributing to the maximum use of scarce resources, the Committee recommends that the State party accord greater attention to the development of a primary health-care system, which would develop a culture of nutrition, hygiene and sanitation.

29. The Committee recommends that special efforts be developed to guarantee an effective system of birth registration, in the light of article 7 of the Convention, to ensure the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights by all children. Such a system would serve as a tool in the collection of statistical data, in the assessment of prevailing difficulties and in the promotion of progress in the implementation of the Convention. Similarly, the Committee recommends that an adequate system of registration of refugee children be established to ensure that their rights are protected.

30. The Committee also recommends that greater efforts be made to promote the participation of children in family, school and social life, and the effective enjoyment of their fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of opinion, expression and association.

31. With reference to the implementation of article 19 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that a system of complaints aimed at children victims of any form of violence, abuse, including sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, even while in the care of their parents, be established, as a means to ensure protection of and respect for their rights. It further recommends that cases of abuse be properly investigated, sanctions applied to the perpetrators and publicity given to the sanctions applied to such crimes. The Committee also recommends that a comprehensive and integrated public information campaign be elaborated with a view to preventing and combating all forms of abuse of children and that all necessary measures be taken to ensure the physical and psychological recovery and the social reintegration of children victims of the war, in the light of article 39 of the Convention.

32. The Committee recommends that appropriate legislative measures be adopted and implemented with regard to adoption of children, in the light of the principles of the best interests of the child and respect for his or her views and articles 20 and 21 of the Convention. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993.

33. In the area of child labour, the Committee recommends that appropriate measures be adopted with a view to reflecting fully the Convention, in particular article 32, in legislation and practice, and suggests that consideration be given by the State party to ratifying ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum age for admission to employment. The Committee also suggests that the State party consider seeking cooperation with ILO in this area.

34. With regard to the administration of juvenile justice, the Committee recommends that legal reform be pursued and that the State party take fully into account the provisions of the Convention, in particular articles 37, 39 and 40 as well as other relevant international standards in this area, such as the Beijing Rules, the Riyadh Guidelines and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty. The Committee also recommends that the State party avails itself of the technical assistance programmes of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the Secretariat.

35. The Committee recommends that special protection measures be adopted and implemented in relation to children living and/or working in the street, children in conflict with the law, in particular those deprived of liberty, children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS, including orphans, abused and exploited children and children involved with child labour.

36. The Committee recommends that a meeting be organized, gathering international organizations working in the country, including agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, and competent national authorities, with the aim of assessing the needs for further international assistance with regard to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

37. The Committee recommends that the State party's next periodic report incorporate information on the measures taken and progress achieved in the implementation of the suggestions and recommendations made by the Committee in the present concluding observations.

38. Finally, the Committee recommends that in the light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the initial report and written replies presented by Ethiopia be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and the concluding observations adopted thereon by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and monitoring within the Government, the Parliament and the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations.

UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/15/Add.68
24 January 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Fourteenth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Panama

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Panama (CRC/C/8/Add.28) at its 353rd, 354th, 355th and 356th meetings (CRC/C/SR.353-356), held on 13 and 14 January 1997, and adopted* the following concluding observations:

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the initial report submitted by the State party. The Committee expresses its satisfaction at the constructive dialogue held and for the State party's self-critical approach in identifying a number of areas of concern. The Committee regrets, however, that neither the report nor the written answers to the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/PAN.1) contained information on specific measures taken by the State party to implement the Convention, including at the legislative level.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee notes that the Convention is directly applicable at the national level and can be invoked before the law courts or administrative authorities.

---

* At the 371st meeting, held on 24 January 1997.

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction the efforts made by the Government of Panama in the field of law reform and welcomes the initiatives being undertaken by the Government to further the protection of the family and children by the adoption of the new Family Code, in force since January 1995. The Committee welcomes the promulgation of the Education Law which guarantees intercultural bilingual education for indigenous children and adults. The Committee notes with interest the Government's willingness to provide information and training to its staff, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

5. The recent establishment of a "People's Defender" which will monitor the enjoyment of human rights in Panama, including children's rights, is welcomed by the Committee.

6. The Committee notes with satisfaction the adoption of a Pact for Children to promote children's rights in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a large number of non-governmental organizations. The Committee welcomes the project on "Education for tolerance, education for democracy, human rights, development and peace" set up in 1995 by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

7. The Committee notes the establishment of the Women's Department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and also of the Panamanian Institute for Special Rehabilitation which aims at assisting disabled children.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

8. The Committee is aware that Panama is emerging from a period of social and political upheaval which has had adverse economic repercussions. The Committee notes with concern the long-existing disparities in wealth between different groups of the population which affects the most vulnerable groups and hampers the enjoyment of children's rights.

D. Principal subjects of concern

9. While taking note of the recent achievements in the field of law reform, the Committee is concerned about the insufficient measures taken by the State party to harmonize national legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee is concerned that the Family Code presently in force in Panama does not adequately address the rights recognized by the Convention.

10. The Committee is concerned that the national legislation establishes a different minimum age for marriage between boys and girls and that it authorizes the marriage of girls as young as 14 years of age. The minimum age for employment, which is under 12 in agriculture and domestic services, is also a matter of concern to the Committee. Further, the Committee is concerned that insufficient measures have been taken to protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation.

11. The Committee is concerned at the insufficient measures adopted to ensure effective coordination between different governmental departments competent in areas covered by the Convention as well as between the central and local authorities.

12. The Committee is deeply concerned about the insufficiency of measures to collect disaggregated statistical data and other information on the situation of children, especially those belonging to the most vulnerable groups. This type of information is lacking in particular with respect to girl children, children living and/or working in the streets, disabled children, children living in rural areas and indigenous children. The absence of qualitative and quantitative information on the status of children renders deficient the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Convention.

13. The Committee is of the view that insufficient measures have been adopted to promote widespread awareness of the principles and provisions of the Convention among adults and children alike, particularly those belonging to indigenous populations. The Committee is concerned at the lack of adequate and systematic training provided to professional groups working for and with children, including judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, health professionals, teachers, social workers, personnel working in child care institutions for children, police officers and officials of the central and local administrations.

14. The Committee expresses its concern at the insufficient budget allocation at all levels for social expenditures, in particular in favour of children belonging to the most disadvantaged groups of the population. The Committee notes with great concern the trend towards the perpetuation of poverty amongst marginalized groups of children in Panama, where 25 per cent of families live in poverty and 20 per cent live in extreme poverty. Despite the efforts made by the State party in the health and housing sectors, the situation is still precarious.

15. Particular concern is expressed by the Committee at the insufficient measures undertaken to ensure the effective implementation of the general principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice, especially with regard to the girl child and children belonging to indigenous groups and to poor families. The Committee is deeply concerned about the high incidence of abandoned children and by the fact that approximately 20 per cent of the children born each year are to adolescent mothers.

16. The Committee is concerned by the persistence of violence against children within the family, including the use of corporal punishment. In the light of article 17 of the Convention, the Committee is also concerned about the need for further measures to protect children from media information and material injurious to their well-being.

17. In the light of article 2 of the Convention, the Committee is concerned about the insufficient measures, including of a legislative nature, taken by the authorities to regulate adoption adequately and to prevent and combat abuses, such as the trafficking of children.

18. While recognizing the efforts undertaken by the authorities in the education system, the Committee is concerned about the persisting disparities in relation to the low access to education of children living in rural areas, indigenous children and refugee children, who do not enjoy a system of education adequate to their cultural values and identity. The Committee is also worried about the low rates of retention, the high rates of repetition and school drop-outs, especially at the end of primary education, and by the persistent problem of illiteracy amongst these groups.

19. The Committee is concerned about the insufficient legal protection and the lack of adequate procedures for refugee children, especially unaccompanied minors. It is also concerned by the difficulties encountered by those children in securing access to education, health and social services. Finally, family reunification is also a matter of concern to the Committee.

20. The Committee notes with concern that child labour remains a problem in Panama. The high number of children involved in labour, especially in rural areas and in particular in coffee-growing areas as a result of a long-standing cultural pattern, is a matter of concern, as is the fact that the Government has not adequately enforced child labour provisions in the rural areas of the country.

21. The situation in relation to the administration of juvenile justice, and in particular its lack of compatibility with articles 37, 39 and 40 of the Convention as well as with other relevant international standards, is a matter of concern to the Committee. Moreover, the apparent absence in national legislation of minimum ages below which a child may not be deprived of liberty or be considered criminally responsible causes deep concern to the Committee.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

22. Within the context of the legal reform undertaken by Panama, the Committee recommends that children's issues be accorded a higher priority in the State party. The Committee also recommends that the State party adopt all the necessary measures to ensure the full compliance of its national legislation with the Convention. In this regard, the Committee encourages the State party to pursue its efforts aimed at the adoption of a Code on Children. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that any required changes to legislation be undertaken in the light of article 2 (non-discrimination), article 3 (best interests of the child), article 6 (right to life, development and survival) and article 12 (respect for the views of the child). In this spirit, the Committee recommends that the State party define in its legislation a minimum age below which children may not be deprived of their liberty. Similarly, measures must be undertaken to ensure the conformity of national legislation with the provisions of article 37 (a) of the Convention. Further, the Committee recommends that the State party review its legislation on the age of marriage for girls with a view to raising it. The Committee encourages the State party to take all appropriate measures to protect children against sexual exploitation.

23. The Committee encourages the State party urgently to develop a comprehensive national strategy on children and to pursue its efforts to strengthen the institutional framework to promote and protect human rights in

general and the rights of the child in particular. In this regard, the Committee recommends that a permanent and multidisciplinary mechanism be developed to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Convention at both national and local levels and in urban and rural areas.

24. The Committee recommends that the establishment of an independent body, such as an ombudsperson, be given further consideration by the Government. The Committee also encourages the promotion of closer cooperation between the State party and non-governmental organizations.

25. The Committee further recommends that the State party give priority attention to the development of a system of data collection by age, gender, rural/urban and social ethnic origin, and to the identification of appropriate disaggregated indicators with a view to addressing all areas of the Convention and all groups of children in society, to evaluate progress achieved and difficulties hampering the realization of children's rights. This is especially important in the case of Panama where historical disparities have endured, in particular with respect to female, rural and indigenous children. It is further suggested that the State party envisage requesting international cooperation in this regard, notably from UNICEF.

26. In the spirit of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, the Committee recommends that the State party take measures aimed at developing a culture of human rights and at changing attitudes towards children in general, and in particular children belonging to indigenous groups. It therefore recommends that information and education about children's rights be disseminated to children and adults alike. Such information should be translated into the different languages spoken by indigenous people. Moreover, the existence of a high level of illiteracy in the country requires the use of the media in a manner adapted to the various levels of the audiences in the country.

27. The Committee recommends that training and education on the principles and provisions of the Convention be undertaken and addressed to all professionals working with or for children, including judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, health professionals, teachers, social workers, personnel working in child care institutions for children, police officers and officials of the central and local administrations. In addition, the Committee recommends that children's rights be included in the school curricula as a measure of enhancing respect for indigenous culture, promoting multiculturalism and combating the paternalistic attitudes prevailing in society. In this regard, the Committee encourages the State party to envisage seeking technical cooperation from appropriate international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and UNICEF.

28. With respect to articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Convention, it is the opinion of the Committee that appropriate budgetary provisions should be made to the maximum extent possible. In this regard, particular attention should be given to children belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups, with a view to providing adequate services, including in the areas of education and health, and to overcoming persisting disparities. The Committee emphasizes that the interrelated and integrated nature of the rights provided for in the

Convention requires that the Convention be recognized as the general framework for reaching decisions on the allocation of resources for children. Moreover, in the light of article 4 of the Convention, international assistance provided to Panama should aim at the promotion of children's rights.

29. Further efforts are required to ensure the active participation of children and their involvement in all decisions affecting them in the family, at school and in social life, in the light of articles 12, 13 and 15 of the Convention.

30. The Committee recommends that effective public awareness campaigns be developed and that measures be adopted by the State party to provide appropriate assistance to the family in the performance of its child-rearing responsibilities, including parental guidance and counselling, with a view, inter alia, to preventing domestic violence and to prohibiting the use of corporal punishment as well as to preventing early pregnancies. It also recommends that the State party reinforce existing measures to protect children from harmful information.

31. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to regulate and monitor national and international adoptions in order to prevent any violations of the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially its article 21. It is also recommended that adequate training be provided to concerned professionals. The Committee also suggests that Panama consider becoming a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993.

32. In the area of education, it is the view of the Committee that a range of measures should be undertaken by the State party to ensure the implementation of articles 28 and 29 of the Convention. Taking into account the strategy being developed, the Committee recommends that the State party focus greater efforts on eradicating illiteracy and on increasing access to school education by indigenous children and children living in rural areas. The Committee recognizes that this requires greater efforts in training teachers. The Committee also recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to fight school drop-outs and ensure retention.

33. As a means of tackling the integrated issues of education and child labour, the Committee recommends that all sectors of society and the economy become involved in implementing the Committee's recommendations that the Government undertake effective public campaigns to prevent and eliminate child labour, especially in rural areas, while systematically and forcefully encouraging the enrolment, retention and return of children to school. The Committee suggests that Panama consider becoming a party to ILO Convention No.138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and review all relevant standards. Regulations to prevent child labour should be clarified and enforced, complaints should be investigated and severe penalties imposed for violations. The Committee also suggests that the State party consider seeking cooperation with ILO in this area.

34. The Committee recommends that the Government of Panama ensure adequate protection of refugee children, including in the field of education. Procedures should be developed in cooperation with the Office of the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to facilitate family reunification as well as to appoint legal representatives for unaccompanied children and to apply, when relevant, child-friendly interview techniques.

35. The Committee encourages the State party to take all appropriate measures to prevent and combat sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and to ensure their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration in the light of article 39 of the Convention.

36. The Committee further recommends that the juvenile justice system be revised to ensure its compatibility with the principles and provisions of the Convention, including those of its articles 37, 39 and 40, as well as of other United Nations standards in this field, such as the Beijing Rules, the Riyadh Guidelines and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty. In addition, it is recommended that the State party consider requesting technical assistance in this field from the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the Secretariat.

37. Finally, in the light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the initial report and written replies presented by Panama be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and the concluding observations adopted thereon by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and monitoring within the Government, the Parliament and the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations.